



## INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGICAL METHODS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD FOR FUTURE UPSWING

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### Abstract:

Tertiary education among other things contribute to national development through high level-relevant manpower training; develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individuals and society: develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate /their local and external environments. This article is aimed at discussing innovative pedagogical methods, and best practices for assurance of quality in higher education in Nigeria. It equally highlights some challenges to academic quality assurance in the tertiary institution and this paper proffered some solution required by the universities to stamp out the challenges for future development. Academic quality assurance can be referred to as ensuring that all the processes involved in the instruction of students remain standardized at all times. This paper examines academic quality assurance and determines the general opinion on academic quality assurance in the tertiary institution. This paper found out that Education is regarded the world over as a very important tool for development.

**Keywords:** academics, quality assurance, tertiary institution, challenges and development

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## 1. Introduction

Across the world, tertiary education strives to attain high quality and standards in all their activities especially teaching, research, community development and innovation. Tertiary education institutions of high quality and standards are highly subscribed by the general public and such institutions have recorded good public image globally (Romina, 2020). Tertiary education among other things contributes to national development through high level-relevant manpower training; develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individual and society. The significance of quality education in nation building cannot be over accentuated. For qualitative education to be achieved in a nation, the principal actors of learning who are the teachers and learners and the environment must be cooperatively organized. The teacher must be adequate in quality and quantity, the students must be well trained and facilities must be provided as well (Sunday, 2010). This is to say quality assurance is seen within the context of function that is how much value has been added to the knowledge, skills and abilities of learners regardless of their initial level of competence.

Tertiary education has fundamentally statutory task of producing middle and high-level manpower for national development. This is in addition to providing intellectual training in the basic sciences and the liberal arts. Specifically, tertiary education, according to the National Policy on Education (2013), has the following goals to:

- a. contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- b. develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individual and society;
- c. develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- d. acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- e. promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- f. forge and cement national unity; and
- g. promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The above goals are to be pursued through teaching, research and development, staff development programmes, generation and dissemination of knowledge, a variety of modes of programmes including full-time, part-time, block-release, day-release, sandwich, and the like. Colleges of education, both conventional and specialized (colleges of education, technical) are among the various categories of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Essentially, colleges of education are to provide full-time courses in teaching, instruction and training and to conduct courses in education for qualified teachers. Anikweze (2001) noted that colleges of education were to produce highly qualified non-graduate professional teachers for the primary and junior secondary level of education in Nigeria. To ensure colleges of education products attain the broad goals of tertiary

education, as well as, ensure quality in the preparation of teachers' relevance and professionalism, there is need for academic quality assurance. Academic quality assurance implies that the products of tertiary institution are of high quality and ensure the right person is awarded the right grade at the successful completion of a programme.

The point being made here is that the issue of academic quality assurance to ensure credibility of certification is essential in man-power. Thus, where a deviation occurs, quality required will no longer be assured.

More so, the higher the quality of man-power turned out by institutions, the faster the rate of growth, development and achievement of a country's education goal. On the contrary lower quality may impact negatively on development. Apparently, there are factors responsible for low academic quality assurance and such factors are challenges that must be addressed to ensure desired condition that enhanced academic quality that can result in growth and future development. Consequently, the aims of this paper are to:

- examine what academic quality assurance entails;
- determine what the general opinion is, on the academic quality assurance in tertiary institution;
- discuss some challenges to academic quality assurance in tertiary institution;
- suggest the ways forward for future development.

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## **2. Academic Quality Assurance Presuppose**

The term quality assurance refers to *"systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and improvement"* (Vroeijenstijn, 1995) as cited in Watty (2003). Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) argued that quality assurance is related to accountability both of which are concerned with maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of educational systems and services in relation to their contexts, of their missions and their slated objectives. In the write up, quality in education can be seen or defined as the level of excellence in performance or the strength of the quality in the contexts, inputs, process transactions and output. Academic quality assurance can be referred to as (Okebukola, 2004) ensuring that all the processes involved in the instruction of students remain standardized at all times.

Presents academic quality assurance as a process of continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning activities which will be achieved via pathways of employing mechanisms internal and external to the system. It is ensuring that at least the provision of the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) documents are attained, maintained and enhanced (Omoregie, 2005). For the education industry to carry out the functions of development, quality human capital must be involved, through the

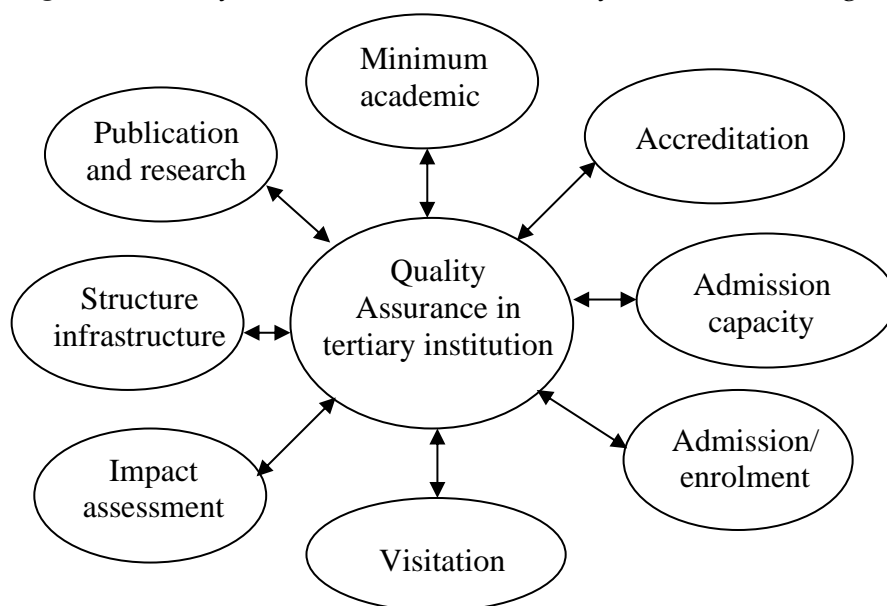
acquisition of appropriate skills and knowledge; there is need for checks and balances through regular and effective inspection and supervision of our schools (Nwogu, 1980).

In other words, there must be mechanism in place for assessing the quality and or performance of school services, programmes and projects by officials of the Ministry of Educations or its agencies that are specially established to fulfill these responsibilities. In essence, there must be ways and means of ensuring quality control and maintenance of standards. As a matter of fact, the minimum academic standards specify the performance criteria which should be complied with by universities in the different disciplines. Full compliance with the approved criteria for a particular academic programme leads to the academic programmes being given full accreditation. In this respect, it implies that for an individual to acquire a certificate in tertiary institutions he/she must meet the minimum standards of the institution before issuance of certificate.

However, academic quality assurance demands that an appropriate monitoring system be in place so that requisite data for judging quality can be obtained (Afemikhe, 2007). According to him, quality assurance involves all actions that are necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product or service will satisfy given requirements for quality. He further maintained that the mission of quality assurance activities is to: improve quality through guidelines, promote wide deployment and proper implementation of specification, communicate and design effective processes to achieve goals.

In essence, quality in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria is a multi-dimensional concept which should embrace all its functions and activities: teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, building, facilities, equipment, services to community and academic environment (UNESCO as cited in Omoregie, 2005) as depicted in the model below:

**Figure 1:** Quality assurance driver's in tertiary institutions in Nigeria



### **3. Academic Quality Assurance in Tertiary Institutions**

A close look at our tertiary institutions indicates that most of the certified products lack acceptable level of competence in their area of specialization. Ifedili (2002) asserted that many departments in various Nigeria educational systems are producing not so qualified graduates which have a negative chain effect in the economic, social and political development of the country. According to Ade-Ajayi (2002) World Bank Funded Research by the Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER) reported that Nigerian graduates are below standard in the acquisition of language analytical and technical skills. Other verdicts are no less frustrating.

Obayan (2002) remarks that what exist as higher education is not as high as it ought to be. There seems to be a general pattern of academic quality failure in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In order to have quality teachers, Harris (1992) is of the opinion that teacher production in the tertiary institutions should be based on a sound philosophy and on such rationale that should guarantee the acquisition of necessary knowledge components and professional skills which would enable pre-service would-be teachers to benefit from schooling and become better teachers. This expectation is perceived as critical to the survival of the various disciplines in the curriculum of education. According to Obayan (2002) what higher education (inclusive of colleges of education) should do for Nigeria is to provide her work critical mass of person with analytical power, communicative skills, problem solving ability, team spirit, creative, versatility and lifelong learning skills who will act as catalyst to national development. The most potent likely reason is that there are challenges to academic quality assurance in the tertiary institutions resulting in steady decline in quality/standard. Some of these challenges are discussed below.

### **4. Innovative Pedagogical Methods to be Used in the Classroom**

Capturing your student's attention and leaving a lasting impression can be a bit challenging. To tackle this challenge effectively, you need to embrace and implement innovative ideas in your classroom. Gunn (2014) noted that Innovative teaching methods to be used in the classroom to make the classroom more fun for your students.

#### **4.1 Introduce Stories**

Learning sessions become engaging and interesting when you introduce it as a story. Just think about it, why do people watch movies with so much interest? The suspense, the entertainment, the distraction, or just seeing a bunch of people moves in a screen? I would say that it is because it keeps people engaged. Introducing the storytelling method pushes you to be creative and get your students to look forward to your classes even if it is math.

## 4.2 A Class Away from Class

Field trips and excursions should be an integral part of the learning process. Plan a visit to the zoo, historic sites, museums, biological gardens, or a plantation. Whatever you decide, ensure that they are relevant to the study. You can decide to hold the class outside the classroom if the weather is friendly.

A change of scenery from the regular table and chairs might be all the students need to have an open mind towards learning. Most importantly, they would have little or no reason to forget the lessons learnt in class.

## 4.3 Role Play

Role play can increase and develop interpersonal skills in your students and get them out of their comfort zone. This is one of the innovative teaching methods to be used in the classroom that would definitely come in handy, especially when teaching history, literature or current events.

Students have a clear understanding of the relevance of what they learn and the impact it has on their daily lives. Remember to keep it short and simple or moderate and engaging.

## 4.4 Video & Audio

Supplement textbooks with audio and video tools. These tools and other [technological tools](#) would help their imagination grow and understand the concepts better. You can use movies, filmstrips, infographics, and recordings of public lectures, slideshows, or podcasts while ensuring that you review all contents first.

There could be a discussion at intervals in the classroom, allowing the students to express themselves and their thoughts on the information they are currently ingesting.

## 4.5 Games

You can make learning super fun and get your students' concentration level to go up to 100%. Yeah! It's possible. This method helps your students to be creative and face challenges if introduced in subjects like Math, Geometry, English, or Arts.

## 4.6 Learning Space

A learning space is identified by the items in it, the feeling anyone gets as soon as they step in. You wouldn't expect to see an office decorated with balloons, well, except it's a festive season, even at that there is a certain feeling you get, the 'corporate' comes to life. For the classroom, it should be a [fun learning environment](#), comfortable too. The settings differ for each section, which is the kindergarten, nursery, primary and secondary. Create a positive and healthy environment as the learning environment has a primary role to play in the learning and development of your students. Having an open-minded attitude can help you implement these innovative teaching methods. These ideas, when implemented, would help you and your students look forward to the time you spend together in the classroom.

## **5. Challenges of Academic Quality Assurance in Tertiary Institutions**

The problem of low academic quality assurance is a function of a number of factors such as population growth, poor facilities and equipment, examination malpractices, poor staffing, poor funding, corruption and quality of students.

### **5.1 Population Growth**

Currently, there is student population explosion in tertiary institutions due to increase in enrolment without the required or expansion of facilities. The implication of population explosion is that classrooms are over-crowded while laboratories and other learning materials are grossly inadequate because of insufficient funding. Population explosion means also that there are no enough chairs, desks, tables, water and electricity, no space for teachers and students to go round for interaction; there is overcrowding everywhere leading to restiveness and indiscipline (Akpochafo and Filho, 2008). This has its consequences for standards and quality in form of low growth and productivity of students and graduates of our tertiary institutions.

### **5.2 Poor Facilities and Equipment**

This is manifest inadequate and poor state of classrooms, offices, laboratories, hostels and libraries. The provision of the relevant educational facilities and equipment is vital in the provision of quality educational services to all students. However, the poor state of facilities and equipment has been a major challenge to academic quality assurance in the tertiary institutions.

### **5.3 Examination Malpractice**

Examination malpractice has undergone various forms and sophistication. Common examples are impersonation, bringing prepared notes and textbooks into the examination hall, bringing information on items of clothing, palm and currency notes, bribing invigilators and supervisors, and the like. Examination malpractice threatens any academic and professional system. Examination malpractice has implication on academic quality and standard as mediocre are produced from any educational system that is fraught with examination malpractice (Osagiede, 2005).

### **5.4 Poor Staffing**

The success of any education system depends to a very large extent on the supply of teachers in terms of quantity and quality. According to Utulu as cited in Akpochafo and Filho (2008) teachers are the quality indicators in the educational process. They represent a key input of a highly skilled labour resource which combined with the education plant and its allied services, produces educated or at least schooled individuals. But our tertiary institutions are faced with problem of shortage of highly experienced academic staff. For instance, ratios by discipline are far from encouraging especially in the humanities and some science-based disciplines (Omoregie, 2005). The problem of quantity and quality

academic staff has serious implications for academic quality assurance and credentialing. As noted by Akpochafo and Filho (2008) the shortage of staff (both in quantity and quality) means high student-lecturer ratio which will impact on the teaching-learning process. According to them, individualized attention is hard to achieve, it encouraged memorization, Examination malpractice and result in the neglect of inculcation of analytical and problem solving skills needed for life. The summary is that the expected quality and standard are not being met.

### 5.5 Poor Funding

According to Ajayi and Ekundayo (2007), the funds allocated to higher education should not be considered as mere expense, but as a long-term investment of immense benefit to the society as a whole. As such, a vision in the Nigerian, context is an image or concept in the imagination of our political leaders. It is not reality but something that could guide decisions and actions to make it happen. A well-structured funding arrangement is imperative for meeting the cost of providing adequate educational service in tertiary institutions. However, inadequate funding affects the provision of facilities and the recruitment of the desired manpower to implement the programmes that have been developed. This in turn affects the academic delivery in the institutions resulting in what Yaqub (2002) called "*a dull intellectual atmosphere*". Anavberokhai (2007) averred the poor funding affects proper planning and implementation of policies and programmes, as well as, lower productivity. The UNESCO has recommended a standard budget allocation to educational sector to stand as 26%. The Nigerian government has since 1999 been spending less on education. From the allocation of 11.2% in 1999, the figure fell to 8.36% in 2000 and 7.0% in 2001. In 2002, the figure was 5.9% and 1.83% in 2003. The reduced spending has impacted negatively on the system as basic necessities for teaching and research are lacking in tertiary institutions. Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2005) remarked that fund is crucial in facilities acquisition, staff development (to cater for the enrolment increase) and for policy implementation. In the face of acute shortage of funds, other inputs suffer setback, which in turn influence the level of quality obtainable. To this end, poor funding has the following implications for academic quality assurance:

- inability to recruit and retain qualified staff;
- inadequately funded research activities;
- inability to meet the welfare and academic needs of staff and students resulting in strikes and closure of institutions;
- general frustration of staff leading to brain drain;
- collapse of facilities and equipment;
- emergence of unedifying academic situation and the erosion of time-honoured standards academically and morally;
- the discarding of procedures and the enthronement of a dull intellectual atmosphere. in effect, poor facilities, and other learning materials, due to poor funding impede academic quality assurance.



### **5.6 Corruption**

Embezzlement, misappropriation and diversion of the scarce funds meant for educational purposes further impoverish the sector (Anavberokhai, 2007). The implication is that there can hardly be any meaningful implementation of policy, acquisition of facilities and libraries which are vital to effective teaching and research.

### **5.7 Quality of Students**

These days, the quality of fresh men admitted into the system is low. This is because their preparation at the primary and secondary levels were poor and many of them passed their examination by relying heavily on examination malpractice (Akpochofo and Filho, 2008). According to them, they (students) lack the culture of scholarship and hard work. Many go into lecture halls without textbooks and even pens. A good number of them, they stated, recorded less than 50% attendance at lectures and default in assignments. Students now see the acquisition of credentials/certificate as a do or die affair, even if it means attaining the certificate not on the basis of learning. As noticed by Akpochofo and Filho (2008), students in Nigeria higher institutions are not there for serious and committed academics, they shun the strain and rigour associated with higher education. They further maintained that it becomes difficult to get students to learn, to investigate, to research to engage in independent study. The bottom line is that the quality and standard of students are no longer assured.

## **6. Way Forward for Future Upswing**

Unfortunately, our inspection services at all levels have not lived up to expectation. This situation is not unconnected with a number of issues and challenges. To address this abnormality therefore, the following mechanism could be put in place.

### **6.1 Improved Facilities and Equipment**

If improvements are to manifest in the quality and standard in the service and products of tertiary institution, it is imperative that universities should be adequately equipped and staffed so that they can carry out meaningful teaching and learning. Adequate facilities are very vital to the successful training and certification of products.

### **6.2 Eradication of Examination Malpractice**

Concrete efforts should be geared towards value re-orientation as regards examination malpractice. In this regard, there is need to put in place a regular internal examination monitoring committee comprising of academic and non-academic staff of the institution to monitor the conduct of all examinations and bring those who engaged in examination malpractice to book. Also, there should be creation of favourable environments for studies in the universities.

### **6.3 Improved Funding**

Government should have the political will to determine how education in Nigeria should be funded with its decisions on funding parameters. Thus, the proposed 26% of Federal Government's budgetary allocation to education as suggested by UNESCO should be approved. Again, since education is capital intensive, guaranteed alternative sources of funding need to be identified to ensure the required facilities and equipment are put in place for effective teaching and learning in the universities. Besides, there is need for some integrity on the part of school management. Funds for academic purpose must only be used for their original purposes and never diverted or misappropriated. There is need for improved funding because promotion of high and improved quality and standard in the universities are often constrained by underfunding and inadequate financial resources.

### **6.4 Staff Development and Welfare**

The quality and quantity of staff needed to be raised. On its part, government should make the job of lecturing more attractive - better pay, funds for research and improved work environment (Akpochofo and Filho, 2008). Afemikhe (2007) advised colleges of education authorities to emphasize on teachers training and re-training to acquaint them with development in assessment practices that can provide more valid and reliable scores. One agrees with these suggestions and urges colleges of education to encourage staff to attend seminars, workshops and conferences. Effective teaching cannot be achieved without sound knowledge of teaching pedagogy.

#### **A. External Academic Quality Assurance Mechanism**

The adoption of benchmarks to evaluate and maintain quality in all the tertiary institution in Nigeria.

#### **B. Internal Academic Quality Assurance Mechanism**

The required setting up academic quality assurance unit in tertiary institutions to monitor and evaluate teaching-learning process. The duties of the academic quality assurance unit should include the following:

- supervision of curriculum design, content and organization;
- supervision of curriculum implementation (course by course) - what portion of a 16 weeks semester is used for actual teaching;
- students class attendance (register of attendance must be kept);
- student progression and achievements including attrition/dropout rate;
- student support, guidance and counseling;
- periodic assessment of human and material resources available to each programme;
- feedback to all levels following data analysis to facilitate continuous improvement in quality;
- continuous interface with Quality Assurance Agency and professional bodies to keep abreast with latest information;
- tracking of the graduates for feed-back from employers.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper concludes that it is important for tertiary institutions in Nigeria to embrace the innovative pedagogical techniques in order to maintain quality and minimum standard of education globally. School managers, stakeholders in the school system, the powers that be and other respectful and reputable persons in the education industry must therefore be resolved to implement the new pedagogy with all the indices of quality assurance in our educational expedition for national development.

### 7.1 Recommendations

- 1) The educational system in Nigeria needs total evaluation so as to reduce low quality standards in the tertiary institutions.
- 2) Well developed and reformed curriculum content is worth having. This entails that our curriculum needs evaluation admit innovations and new methods to be integrated.
- 3) Regular monitoring and evaluation of all the units concern with the certification of university graduates.
- 4) Regular in-service programmes, workshops, seminars and conferences for both academic and non-academic staff to abreast them of new development in their discipline.

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